

June 2023

Country – capital	The Gambia – Banjul. <sup>1</sup>
Population	Mandinka/Jahanka 33.3%, Fulani/Tukulur/Lorobo 18.2%, Wolof 12.9%, Jola/Karoninka 11%, Serahuleh 7.2%, Serer 3.5%, other 4%, non-Gambian 9.9% (2020 est.). Total population 2.5 million (est. 2023). <sup>2</sup>
Geography	Western Africa, at the North Atlantic Ocean, on three sides surrounded by Senegal. <sup>3</sup>
Languages	English (official), Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, other indigenous vernaculars. <sup>4</sup>
Writing system	Latin. <sup>5</sup>
Education and literacy	58.1 % is literate, females lower than males (51.2% resp. 65.2% est. 2021). <sup>6</sup> Net primary school enrollment rate has increased to 82% in 2018. <sup>7</sup> Education is in 5 stages: lower basic, upper basic and secondary school, followed by undergraduate and graduate university. The 6 years of lower basic education is compulsory and free, but is hindered by a lack of facilities. After a selection examination at the end of this period, lower basic education continues for another 3 years leading to a junior school certificate. Those students whose parents can afford the cost of ongoing education, enjoy the relative luxury of 3 years at senior secondary school. Curriculum includes English language, mathematics, integrated science and social studies, plus some elective subjects like commerce, science or the arts. <sup>8</sup>
Religions	Muslim 96.4%, Christian 3.5%, other or none 0.1% (2019-20 est.). <sup>9</sup>
Conflict history and overview	The Gambia gained its independence from the UK in 1965. Geographically surrounded by Senegal, it formed the short-lived confederation of Senegambia between 1982 and 1989. In 1994, Yahya Jammeh led a military coup overthrowing the president and banning political activity. He subsequently won every presidential election until 2016, when Adama Barrow became president until now. Jammeh went into exile and was investigated by a Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC). <sup>10</sup>
Humanitarian situation	Settlements are mainly scattered along the Gambia River; the capital of Banjul and the country's largest city, Serekunda are at the mouth of the river. 48.6% of the people live below poverty line. Life expectancy at birth is 68 yrs. <sup>11</sup> Main humanitarian challenges are floodings and droughts, leading to waves of internal displacements. <sup>12</sup> In 2022 torrential rains and storms led to the worst flooding in half a century. <sup>13</sup>
Human rights situation	The Jammeh era knew many human rights violations, arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings, targeting and arresting of LGBTI persons, and the murder of 59 West African migrants. <sup>14</sup> The current government took steps to investigate, prosecute, hold accountable some officials who committed abuses or engaged in corruption. <sup>15</sup> It accepted recommendations from the TRRC to prosecute Jammeh and his accomplices. <sup>16</sup> However, impunity remains a problem in security forces. Prison conditions are harsh and life threatening. No investigation of/accountability for gender-based violence, including domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child/early/forced marriage, FGM/C, and laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, although currently rarely enforced. <sup>17</sup>
Situation of women FGM/C – early marriages	Maternal mortality rate is 458 per 100,000 live births (2020). <sup>18</sup> FGM/C was legally banned in 2015 but very few prosecutions. <sup>19</sup> Of the women age 15-49, 75.7 % have undergone FGM. 54.8% of them were cut before the age of 5; 28.1% between the ages of 5 and 9. <sup>20</sup> The minimum age of marriage is 18 years, but 26% of girls are married before the age of 18 and 7% before their 15th birthday. <sup>21</sup>
Situation of LGBTI	A draconian 2014 law punishes same-sex consensual sexual activity by max. 14 yrs prison for men, 5 yrs for women, and “aggravated homosexuality” (HIV, serial offenders) to life imprisonment. Many cases of brutal targeting by authorities under Jammeh. The law led to a wave of arrests and targeting hunts. The current government hasn’t taken steps to decriminalise same-sex or protect LGBTI. <sup>22</sup> Strong societal discrimination. In 2022 police reportedly beat 15 LGBTQI+ for being gay. <sup>23</sup>
Asylum / migration / (IDPs)	Malta: Gambian arrivals unknown. <sup>24</sup> In 2021 64 persons lodged asylum applications in Malta, in first half of 2022 14. <sup>25</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>2</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>3</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>4</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>5</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>6</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>7</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.ENRR.FE?end=2018&locations=GM&start=1971&view=chart>
  - <sup>8</sup> <https://www.scholaro.com/db/Countries/gambia/Education-System>
  - <sup>9</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>10</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>11</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>12</sup> <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/gambia>
  - <sup>13</sup> <https://response.reliefweb.int/gambia>
  - <sup>14</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/africa/gambia> ; <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/the-gambia/>
  - <sup>15</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/the-gambia/>
  - <sup>16</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/16/gambia-should-take-concrete-steps-ex-president-jammeh-face-justice>
  - <sup>17</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/the-gambia/>
  - <sup>18</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>
  - <sup>19</sup> [https://www.28toomany.org/media/uploads/Law%20Reports/gambia\\_law\\_report\\_v1\\_\(september\\_2018\).pdf](https://www.28toomany.org/media/uploads/Law%20Reports/gambia_law_report_v1_(september_2018).pdf)
  - <sup>20</sup> <https://www.28toomany.org/country/the-gambia/>
  - <sup>21</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/resources/fgm-country-profiles/> ; <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/gambia/>
  - <sup>22</sup> <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts>
  - <sup>23</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/the-gambia/>
  - <sup>24</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/mt/figures-at-a-glance>
  - <sup>24</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=0iecXW>

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This factsheet was compiled by Adri van den Berg for Blue Door Education. Adri worked for many years as a Country of Origin Information (COI) researcher, her final post before retiring being with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO, now EUAA) in Malta.